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DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP



A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

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OUR OLD STORY PAPERS "GOLDEN ARGOSY" NO. 1

by W. M. Burns

Two very fine, well written, articles have already appeared in Roundup on Golden Argosy. The first one appeared in Vol. I, No. 10 Roundup under date of Oct. 1931. Titled, "The Last Number of the Golden Argosy." By Mr. Fred J. Singleton. The other appeared in Vol. 12, No. 144 Roundup under date of Sept. 1944, titled, "The Golden Argosy" by Mr. James E. Knott. Therefore, I shall confine myself to writing about the two volumes of Golden Argosy that were really the "cream of the crop" and far superior to any other volumes. These were vols. 5 and 6. I have an old "dog-eared" vol. 5 and will try and describe its contents and give my reasons why I think it one of the best of all the G. A. volumes.

Perhaps I can do this best in the editors own words which appeared on the editorial page of Vol. 5, No. 1, (whole number 209) dated Dec. 4, 1886, in a little article quoted as follows:

"OUR NEW FORM

"This week the Golden Argosy commences its fifth year of life with a very marked change in its size and appearance. Eight more pages of reading matter have been added, making it now a sixteen page journal.

"In place of the three illustrations in the old form, we shall now give eight or nine in every issue, and sometimes even more. The character of the new ones, moreover, will be far

superior to those published in the past. They will be much larger, more effective and more artistic. Many new authors have been added to our corps of writers, and nearly every one of the old favorites is now under contract to write for the Golden Argosy.

"In the new form six serial stories will be published weekly; and they will all be stories of high character and undoubted merit—such stories as are afterward put into book form and sell readily for \$1.25 per volume. Over twenty of these fine book stories will be published in the Golden Argosy during the next year." Unquote.

And there you have it fellows, in the editor's own words. And in less words than I could have explained why G. A. starting with vol. 5 was so much bigger, so much better than preceding volumes.

And the editors promise in the little editorial was faithfully kept in every way, up to the end of vol. 6. The word "Golden" was dropped from the title at end of vol. 6. And with the elimination of the word "Golden," the fortunes of Argosy began to decline. It underwent several changes in size, price, etc., but kept gradually deteriorating as a youths paper until such time as it blossomed out as the first all fiction magazine for adult readers. Then it again really "went places." But this is another story. Before starting on reading content of vol. 5, I wish to say a bit about the hundreds of fine illustrations in this vol. 5. I am no authority whatever on illustrations, in fact a very rank amateur.

But to me it seems that these old G. A. illustrators, or artists, sure knew their business. From an artistic standpoint, (as a tyro, mind you), I consider the illustrations in vol. 5 G. A. far ahead of any other youths paper of that age, except one. In a future article I will name the one youths paper of that era that slightly surpassed G. A. A lot of the fine illustrations throughout vol. 5 are unsigned but in the earlier issues of this volume some of the best are signed "I. B. Woodward" and "Bodfish." Others, "Hooper Bodfish." Yet there were "smash" full page illustrations not signed by any artist. Another name signed to illustrations was "Renault."

On the editorial page of the July 2, 1887 (vol. 5, no. 31) issue was a small editorial lamenting the death of Irving B. Woodward, who died June 8, 1887, aged 28 years, at the height of his career as a successful artist and illustrator.

From July 2 onward for quite some time none of the illustrations were signed. But now and then one appeared signed A. R. W., Bennett, etc.

Now something about the stories and their authors. "The Young Acrobat of the Great North American Circus," by Horatio Alger, is one of the complete serials. "Bob Burton; or, The Young Ranchman of the Missouri," also by Alger is also there except for the first four chapters that appeared in the last issue of vol. 4. "Tom Tracy; or, The Trials of a New York Newsboy," "Ned Newton; or, The Fortunes of a New York Bootblack," and "Walter Griffith; or, The Adventures of a Young Street Salesman," all three giving the name of Arthur Lee Putnam as author.

Now in Mr. Knott's article, previously mentioned, he states that Alger used the name "Putnam" as a pen name. After reading these stories, I fully agree with Mr. Knott that they are Alger stories. As like two-thirds or more of Algers stories under his own name, they are written along his favorite themes, newsboys, street salesman, bootblacks, etc. And if further proof is wanting, "Tom Tracy" by Horatio Alger, Jr. appeared later as Medal Library No. 51, and "Ned Newton" by Alger appeared as Medal Library No. 118.

Edward S. Ellis is well represented in this volume 5 by three complete

serials as follows. "The Camp in the Mountains," "The Last War Trail" and "The Haunted Engine; or, Jack Marvins Run." Also another fine story by Ellis started, but did not finish in this volume. This was titled, "The Young Ranger; or, Perils of the Frontier." This story later appeared in bound book titled, "Storm Mountain." I have in that form.

As a youth I was fond of tales by Harry Collingwood and one of his best is in this volume, titled, "Pirate Island." Oliver Optic is well represented in this volume too, with the following complete serials, "Making a Man of Himself," "Always in Luck" and "The Young Pilot of Lake Montoban," all three serials complete.

"Dick Broadhead," by P. J. Barnum is also complete in this volume. I have been told that Ellis wrote under the pen-name of "P. J. Barnum," but personally I would not want to state this as a fact. One of Frank A. Munsey's famous tales is complete in this volume. It is "The Boy Broker." Other complete serials in the volume 5 are "Camp Blunder" and "Eric Dane," both by Matthew White, Jr., "Drowned Gold" by David Ker, "In Southern Seas; or, "Jack Esbon's Eventful Voyage" by Frank H. Converse, "Little Nan; or, Her Mothers Ring," by Mary A. Dennison, "Natures Young Noblemen," by Brooks McCormick and "The Miners of Minturne Creek," by John C. Hutcheson.

Other incomplete serials starting in either vol. 4, or ending in vol. 6 are as follows: "Luke Bennett's Hide Out" and "Gilbert the Trapper," both by Captain C. B. Ashley, "Bob Burton; or, The Young Ranchman of the Missouri," by Horatio Alger, Jr., "How He Won" by Brooks McCormick, "That Treasure; or, Adventures of Frontier Life" and "Van; or, In Search of an Unknown Race," both by Frank H. Converse, and "Who Shall Be the Heir; or, Fred Somerset in the Smugglers Cave" by Annie Ashmore closes the list of the incomplete serials. In addition to all the serials noted, were hundreds of fine short stories and fact articles.

832 pages, four columns of print to the page, makes a volume of a considerable amount of reading. In serials alone there were eighteen complete, plus ten incomplete ones.

Vol. 6 Golden Argosy was also the

large size 16 page issues, and in every other way like vol. 5. The only real worthwhile volumes in the entire long series.

Starting with vol. 7 the word "Golden" was stricken from the heading and this move started the decline of the paper. It had reached its peak with vol. 6. Also starting with vol. 7 the paper was cut down to about half its former overall size, thus cutting down the size of the illustrations likewise. But in cutting down the size the pages were increased to 32 pages per issue and the price increased to 10 cents per copy. If I remember correctly it lasted just two volumes in that form as evidently sales were dropping off, so once more the pages were reduced to 8 pages per issue and the price dropped to 5 cents per copy. Sales kept dropping off however, so after a time it was once more increased in overall size, but not quite as large as the old Golden Argosy. Several more changes of the same sort took place before it "gave up the ghost" as a youths periodical and finally became the first all fiction magazine for adult readers. Then once more its circulation grew by leaps and bounds. And for many years after it was the largest selling magazine on the newsstands.

DIME NOVELS EXHIBITED

Brooklyn Public Library Showing Publications from 1860

The Brooklyn Public Library at Grand Army Plaza has opened a comprehensive exhibition of old dime novels to run until March 7.

The exhibit covers the publications from the first in 1860 to the last fifty-two years later. It shows the transition from the early small-size novels to the larger format and a five-cent price, and then to the half dimes in full color.

Among the characters first introduced by the color novels were Frank and Dick Merrifield, Nick Carter, Old Sleuth, Old King Brady and Young King Brady, Buffalo Bill, Fred Fearnot, Diamond Dick, the Liberty Boys and the James Boys.

The collection was lent to the library by the Dime Novel Club thru its secretary, Charles Bragin, a retired Brooklyn exporter. Mr. Bragin has collected dime novels for forty

years. The club has 20,000 copies.

—N. Y. Times, Feb. 20th 1947

Sent in by G. Fred Orphal.

NAST AND THE HARPERS

The New York "Mail" says: "The reappearance of the familiar bold signature of 'Th. Nast' on a cartoon in 'Harper's Weekly' has produced more of a sensation than either Nast or the Harpers could have dreamed of. That was a peculiar quarrel, or, rather, its consequences were peculiar. Nast and the Harpers did not agree. They had had several fallings out. Finally, two years ago the artist's vigorous pictures disappeared. He was under contract not to draw for any other periodical, and so every week he sent in a sketch to the Harpers, and they in return continued to pay him \$5,000 a year. During the two years in his cosy home in Morristown he has drawn the best work of his life, as all his friends who have seen the ambitious pictures there stored unite in declaring. He came back from a short trip to Florida a few days ago, and during a visit to Franklin square talked the whole quarrel over with one of the Harpers. They settled their differences. The Harpers have learned to rate his work at a higher valuation than ever before, the absence of it having told upon the popularity of the 'Weekly,' but are no more glad to get it again than he is to furnish it, for he ardently loves the journal on which he made his reputation. The disagreement between himself and his employers was as to his political cartoons. It is significant that the sketch with which he began work anew was upon the Western floods."—Phila. Bulletin, March 6, 1884

OLD INDIAN SCOUT

Every once in a while an old man dies whose fabulous life encompassed so much of the exciting story of the nation's growth it makes one realize how very young this country really is. Such a man was Major Frederick Russell Burnham, dead in California at the age of 87.

Major Burnham was a character right out of the pages of the West's colorful and turbulent history. As an infant he was hidden by his mother in a corn crib during an Indian uprising in Minnesota. He grew up in the

atmosphere of two-gun frontier towns, engaged in campaigns against the war-like Apache Indians, and guarded stage coaches as they rolled across the open plains.

Even these high adventures on the lusty American frontier were not enough for Major Burnham, however. By 1893, he was off in search of gold in Africa. His scouting experience made him an invaluable find for the British, and he soon found himself in the adventure of the Matabele wars in Rhodesia. In the Boer War he was chief of scouts. He won a decoration for his services.

After all this, Major Burnham returned to the United States. In the growing prosperity of the oil business in California, he found a new career. In this he was successful too. Those defeatists who believe the country has already passed the zenith of her power and productivity might look back on the record of Major Burnham. His death makes it seem only yesterday this country was a veritable wilderness of prairies, gun-shooting and Indian fighting. He was a link between the frontier and the present day, and a reminder the country is young. It really hasn't begun to live yet. The future is ahead.

NEWSY NEWS

by Ralph F. Cummings

Happy New Year to all Dime Novel Roundup readers! Looks as if 1948 is coming in with a bang, doesn't it. Let's hope it'll be the best year we ever had.

John P. Ball says it gives him a great kick to go to the mail box and find the good old Roundup there. He has been getting it for 15 years.

Clyde Wakefield lost his mother the day before Christmas, Dec. 24th 1947. So anyone that hasn't heard from him lately will understand. We, the H. H. Bro. send our sincere sympathy to Clyde and his wife. God bless her always.

S. B. Condon says he has Beadles Dime and Half Dime Libraries to trade for Zane Grey and other books.

L. Harding put in towards the Gil Patten fund \$2.00 instead of one. Sorry we made the mistake Pard, as we are now in hot water, ye editor was caught napping for fair, when he re-

ceived the copy and form of the Gil Patten memorial, and discovered that there were two mistakes — one was Patten was spelled wrong, there was an O instead of an E—PattOn and it it should be PattEn, and second Tip Top has no hyphen in it and never did. Three other members besides myself looked over the copy and forms, and we didn't see the mistakes. So we'll see that it's rectified right away.

Edwin Sissung has been very sick, and doesn't feel any too good yet. Also A. W. Edgerton, come on pards, see if you can't feel lots better by the time the February issue rolls around, and then you'll feel like jumping over the moon, whoopee!!!

George Flbaum ran into an old novel dealer down in Florida the ohter day. He is Harold Larang, who used to sell novels by mail from Darien Centre, N.Y. Us old timers remember him.

James Van Demark visited George French and his collection in Dec. He saw lots of his old friends in that collection.

Roy E. Morris has subscribed for another length of time with dear old Roundup.

L. D. Webster wants Munsey's Popular Series No. 9 (1888) and No. 20 (1889) or these stories in any form, Luke Bennetts Hideout and Gilbert, the Trapper. He also wants Arthur Lee Putnam books, too. He also has Algers and Optic's for sale, send for lists, and others.

Carl Linville says some of the comics I sold him a while ago, go back to 1896. He says The New York Tribune had them first, in 1894. Carl has a collection of the Sunday newspaper funnies, of over 1200. That's what I call a real collection. No two alike.

John E. Clark of Bridgeport, Conn. says, if any member would like any of the English novels, such as "The Hotspur," he can supply them—send to him for lists. Write to 1010 Laurel St.

Charles Duprez says, Geez, did the artist who drew the No. 1 cover of Do & Dare, make a steal on Tip Top No. 1. Frank Merriwell was saving his gal from a mad dog on no. 1 of Tip Top, and Rushington was saving his gal from a mad snake he says. Well for kids, in this point, they stood for it. kids were not so smart in them thar days, like they is today!

Bob Smeltzer's ankle is coming a-

long very slow, watch yourself, and the ice too, Pard, one more slip, and Oh!!!

Didja see the ad that John Reischmann had in the December issue, of 5000 novels for sale, for only \$3000.00. That is a buy, I'll say, for he has mostly all good stuff.

Edward Golden of Noroton Hts., Conn., passed the Oct. Roundup with the article in it, Nick Carter in Print, by Ed Leithead, on the Frederick Van Rensselaer Dey's son, and he liked it very much. Mrs. Dey is also living, so we understand.

John L. Shear, Smiths Basin, N. Y. is the publisher and owner of a little amateur paper, called "Something." He is a farmer, and this is the start of a real paper. Like ye editor Cummings, who started with "Cummings and Clarks Flyer," way back in 1922, and Bob Smeltzer was the Printer of it, too.

Fred Lee and several others said that George Flaum's article on "How to Hunt Novels," was fine, and his idea's are sound. They want more ar-

ticles by him, so George, it's up to you now.

Frank Henry, of the Yankee Trading Post Book Store, is now located at 3 Gardiner St., and is working for Joseph Bailey, so if you need anything, let him know. He sends his best wishes to you all.

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Ralph F. Cummings

Fisherville, Mass.

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